Global Systems Division GTAS Monthly Report
February 2009

Introduction

February was significant for the GTAS Project in that after many months of planning and discussions FEMA and NOAA formally began GTAS Project startup. The Pilot Project will be used to determine how state and local government agencies can use advanced weather and toxic plume information for emergency preparedness. GTAS will also demonstrate functionality consistent with IPAWS interoperability requirements for the national next-generation alert and warning infrastructure. In February GSD developed the GTAS Project Plan. Work began on both the Microsoft Project Planning scheduling and gant charts, as well as the GTAS Training Plan. We began staffing the development group with software engineers for the FXC server/client data systems. Additionally, we began discussions with NOAA's Air Resources Laboratory (ARL) for toxic plume model integration and the National Weather Service (NWS) for pilot project field office demonstrations.

Previously we determined that GTAS Pilot demonstrations would take place in NWS' Southern Region, Western Region, Central Region and Eastern Region. Specific cities chosen for the demonstrations include Dallas/FT Worth, Los Angeles, Kansas City (Missouri), New York City and Washington D.C. The first Pilot will be conducted at the Dallas/FT Worth Weather Forecast Office (WFO) and their respective state and local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).

System Support and Implementation Implementation Plans

We travelled to Southern Region Headquarters for discussions with our NWS colleagues about the Project and to gain their support for systems operations. Both their respective technical and management staff were receptive and agreed to help make the implementation in Southern Region successful. While there, we had a conference call with the FT. Worth WFO Meteorologist In Charge (MIC) and he agreed to support the project both technically and with his forecaster staff.

We agreed to have a GTAS data server operational at NWS Southern Region Headquarters in the middle of May. The server will link NWS forecasters with Dallas/FT Worth emergency managers and provide real-time hazard products and collaboration capabilities in the event of a toxic release.

The server will collect meteorological data from NWS' AWIPS and GSD' High Performance Computing Center in Boulder. The weather data will be used:

1. To initialize the toxic plume dispersion that will be reside on the server, and;
2. These data will also be available for display on state and local emergency management GTAS client systems.

We agreed that we will use a high-end data server that can process and store large volumes of meteorological information which will be needed to run the dispersion model over a very smaller scale localized area. Moreover, the server will need to run quad-core processors to provide the clock speed necessary for fast response from users.

From our discussions we agreed to have the server shipped from the manufacturer directly to NWS Southern Region Headquarters. We expect shipment to take place in March. NWS systems technicians will load the operating system onto the server and make the physical connections to their local network. GSD staff will then load the GTAS software on the server hardware. A second duplicate server will be installed in GSD for development. Additionally, a GTAS development machine will be acquired for our project software engineers.

Additional staff with specific expertise needed to support the Project has been identified.